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The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna"

...For Decision on Merits

On December 20, 2001 the member of the unregistered youth organization ZUBR Andrei Zaitsau committed suicide as a result of an attempt of the secret services to enroll him. This fact did not result in criminal proceedings.

When Andrei's father Iury Zaitsau and advocate Zmitsier Ivanishka applied to Homiel Savietski borough court, asking to initiate a criminal case concerning driving Andrei to suicide, the court refused. Considering this decision to be illegal and in violation of their rights they complained against it to the Homiel oblast court and to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus.

The Supreme Court returned the request for initiation of the criminal case to Homiel Savietski borough court for decision on merits.

The advocate Zmitsier Ivanishka examined the people who had direct contacts with Andrei Zaitsau and knew that he was pressurized. Among the people who gave explanations there was Viktar Karnienka, Head of Public association «Public Initiatives» in Homiel. He said the following: «Andrei told me that KGB workers offered him to collaborate with them concerning «Public Initiatives» and asked me what he should do. I advised him to apply to human rights organizations. They demanded he should visit «Public Initiatives» more often, to draw a list of regular visitors, fix the ongoing organization events and main discussion topics, possibly bring to KGB some documents and things. He also said that they summoned him to military recruiting office where there was a KGB worker, who called himself Ieustsihnieieu, how they tried to intimidate him. He also expressed his doubt that Ieustsihnieieu was the real surname of the man there».



Photo of "RF"

Violence in Capital's Center

On April 19 the authorities violently dispelled the peaceful demonstration in Minsk


Photo IREX/ProMedia

The organizers had planned the march of protest «You Cannot Live Like This!» in order to draw the public attention to the fact, that Aliaxandr Lukashenka had not fulfill his pre-election promises. The march was organized by film director Iury Khashchavatski, human rights activist, journalist Valiery Shchukin, coordinator of Charter'97 Zmitsier Bandarenka, and Zubr activist Tsimafiei Dranchuk.

The action started at 6 p.m. in Iakub Kolas Square. The procession managed to get to Skaryna Avenue and Varvashenia Street crossing, where they were blocked by Special Forces policemen. The procession quickly and unexpectedly turned and went back.

(continues on pages 2-3)

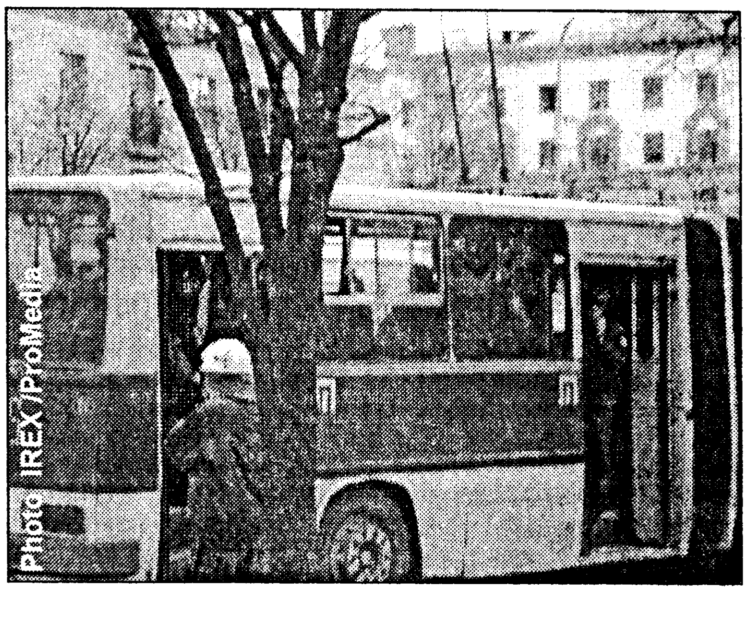

Photo IREX/ProMedia


Photo IREX/ProMedia

Violence in Capital's Center

(continued from page 1)

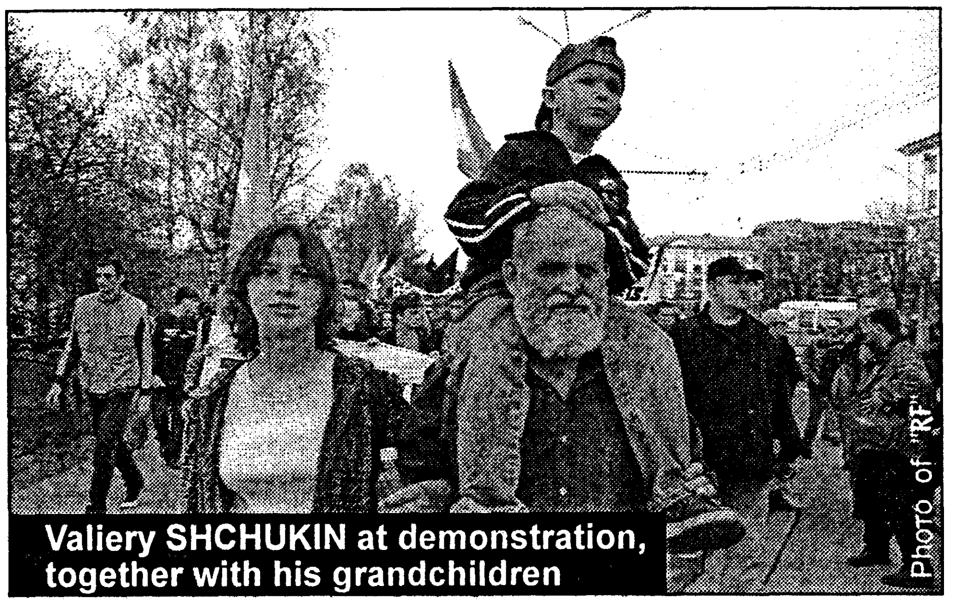
At this moment more Special Forces police buses appeared. The policemen got off the buses and started seizing the march participants. Some march participants just sat down on the road and the police started battering them and dragging them to the buses.

Some people were also detained near the Physical Education Academy (on the other side of Iakub Kolas Square). The police Умопped upФ the square forcing all the people away.

Human Rights Activist Valiery Shchukin has been heavily beaten and taken to hospital. Ialavitski has been taken to hospital with cerebral concussion. An ambulance was called to Savietski borough board of internal affairs where all the detained had been placed. On one of the police buses the special forces policemen beat a pregnant woman.

At the present moment all the detained are in Savietski BBIA. The police buses and Special Forces policemen surrounded the building and did not let journalists and human rights activists come closer.

Here is an incomplete list of people detained and taken to Savetski borough police board:



Valiery SHCHUKIN at demonstration, together with his grandchildren

Photo of "RF"



Valiery SHCHUKIN, already beaten by the police

Photo of "RF"

1. ***Zmitsier Barodka***
2. ***Alieh Miatsielitsa***
3. ***Mikalai Khaliezin*** (journalist)
4. ***Zmitsier Areshka***
5. ***Iury Vasiliuk***
6. ***Maryna Iasiuk*** (under age)
7. ***Ihnatovich***
8. ***Iauhien Shvaieu***
9. ***Padzyvalau*** (heavily beaten)
10. ***Anatol Askierka***
11. ***Zmitsier Karpienka***
12. ***Maxim Aksionau***
13. ***Zmitsier Bandarenka*** (coordinator of Charter'97)
14. ***Liavon Sadouski***
15. ***Natallia Radzina*** (journalist)
16. ***Iury Khashchavatski*** (film director)
17. ***Andrei Piatrou***
18. ***Katsiaryna Baravik***
19. ***Iauhien Afnahiel***
20. ***Lieanid Achapouski***
21. ***Aliaxandra Andzhyieuskaia***
22. ***Aliaxandr Atroshchankau***
23. ***Siarhiei Bokhanan***
24. ***I. Dzehtsiarou***
25. ***V. Idzievich***
26. ***A. Hrydziushka***
27. ***S. Liadko***
28. ***V. Iatsko***
29. ***S. Iatsko***
30. ***F. Tutzhyk***
31. ***Miatsielik***
32. ***S. Pienkin***
33. ***Ia. Shumski***
34. ***Zmitsier Holubieu***
35. ***A. Kholad***
36. ***A. Iashchanka***
37. ***Iury Vaskrasienski***
38. ***Ialavitski*** (in hospital with brain shake)
39. ***Iadko*** (beaten, possible brain shake)
40. ***Raman Kazakievich***
41. ***Liubou Kuchynskaia***
42. ***Zmitsier Matsakouski***
43. ***Raman Karpovich***
44. ***Zmitsier Vishnieuski***
45. ***Katsiaryna Dziadko***
46. ***Iury Fabisheuski***
47. ***Siarhiei Kiedyshka***
48. ***Vasil Zhakau***
49. ***Maxim Shyraieu***
50. ***Alaksandra Yasiuk***
51. ***Halavatski***
52. ***Osipau*** (hospitalized)
53. ***Iury Varanko***
54. ***Andrei Asmalouski***
55. ***Mikola Savitski***
56. ***Siarhiei Rabkievich***
57. ***Aliena Rashetnikava***
58. ***Hieorhi Repin***
59. ***Vital Zhlobich***
60. ***Kazakou*** (under age)
61. ***Barsukou*** (under age)
62. ***Balotsina*** (under age)
63. ***Doryna*** (under age)
64. ***Varazhur*** (under age)
65. ***Tsimokh Shadziievich*** (under age)
66. ***Vasil Shadziievich***
67. ***Aliaxiei Strotski*** (under age)
68. ***Mikita Sasim***
69. ***Iamshykou***
70. ***Dzianis Chykaliou***
71. ***Luhautsou***
72. ***Nina Trukhanienka***
73. ***Kazimir Murashka***
74. ***Alieh Zhlutka***

On 22 April 2002 Savietski, Partyzanski and Tsentralny borough courts of Minsk started the trials over the participants of the action «Can't Live Like That!» This time the courts demonstrated a new tendency: those, who demanded a lawyer, were sent back to the pretrial detention center in Akrestsin Street. Their reasons, that «there is no phone in a cell, I will not be able to contact a lawyer from the detention center», did not make impact on the judges. Practically, it means that administrative detention is not limited in time, a person, can be kept behind the bars until the cour

Tsentralny borough court:

Andrei Piatrou — 3 days of jail

Zmitsier Holubieu — 5 days of jail

Zmitsier Barodka (Barysau) — 5 days of jail

Iauhien Afnahiel — 3 days of jail

Viktar Suich — 5 days of jail

Uladzislau Ihnatovich — 5 days of jail

Vasil Zhakau — the trial is postponed to 23 April at 11.00 because the witnesses (policemen) did not appear in court. He was sent back to the detention center.

Zmitsier Masakouski — fined 300,000 BRB (~170 USD)

Aliaxandr Hrydziushka — 5 days of jail

Alieh Miatsielitsa — 5 days of jail

Ihar Siuld — 5 days of jail

Raman Kazakievich — 10 days of jail

Alieh Zhlutka — an observer of the Human Rights Center Viasna, demanded a lawyer and was sent back to the detention center. The trial will take place on 23 April.

Partyzanski borough court:

Siarhiei Rabkievich — 7 days of jail

Iury Fabisheuski — 3 days of jail

Anatol Askierka — 10 days of jail

Iury Buber — 3 days of jail

Vieranika Kupchanka — 3 days of jail

Aliaxandr Atroshchankau — 5 days of jail

Aliaxiei Iashchanka — 3 days of jail

Ihar Zakreuski — 3 days of jail

Zmitsier Tsenunin — 3 days of jail

Valiery Shchukin (journalist, human rights activist) — 15 days of jail. He was heavily beaten during the action. The police took him to detention center from the intensive care unit in neuro-surgery department of the hospital. According to Valery Shchukin, they took him «practically from the dropper».

Four Days In Detention Center

Detainee's Notes

At 6 p.m. on April 19 in Iakub Kolas Square the action of social protest «You Can't Live Like This!» started. Having taken a request to monitor the action at Human Rights Center Viasna, I came there to watch the events.

Minsk City Executive Committee that had stopped regarding citizens as people long ago (if had ever treated them like human beings at all) didn't authorize the action and, as usual, ordered to hold it in Banhalor square, a place where people with dogs usually walk. In Iakub Kolas Square about 2 000 people gathered, mainly youth. After a couple of short speeches the action participants made a column and went along the pavements in direction of Kastrychnitskaia Square. They carried flags, posters with the demands to increase scholarships, wages and pensions.

It was known in advance that the yards across Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue had many buses with special police forces, police workers in plain clothes were standing everywhere... One could say for sure that there would be mass arrests and beating, but nobody expected it to start so soon...

The demonstrators managed to cover only about 500 meters. Near the tram line the dense police cordon overlapped the way. I was going after the column and could see only the heads in helmets. Then the events developed at a lightning speed. The column turned around, occupied half of the road, where there were no cars, and quickly, almost running, went forward. In 20 seconds, I didn't even notice from what direction, the police busses appeared with the specially equipped and trained policemen. They were running off the busses as if it were an anti-



terrorist operation. A part of people ran towards the nearest arc in order to escape through yards, but the police beat them there as well. Then the column started toE sit down. Why? For What purpose? Were these people indifferent to their own lives and health? Quite on the contrary. From the earlier experience they knew that the «courageous» workers of the law machinery tend to turn into beasts when people try to escape or protect themselves. That's why sitting on the ground allowed people to hide one behind another, to cover themselves by hands and look up from where the truncheons slumped on them...

I didn't have much time for watching. A bus stopped opposite me, the policemen forced two youngsters inside and started to beat them with feet and truncheons there. When they noticed that their «educational activity» was being filmed by a journalist, they pushed the youngsters on the floor, so that not much could be seen from the windows. Then they put them on the back seats of the bus. I ran towards the bus and through an open window asked them what were their surnames in order to give this information to Viasna and phone their relatives. The guys were still shocked and only fearfully looked at me with eyes wide open. Suddenly a dark-haired man in a leather jacket seized me by hand and passed to the policemen in the bus, telling them: «Take one more, he wanted to talk through the window!» I showed the policemen my observer's direction. The answer was: «You can put it in the ass!»

That's how I appeared near the other detainees, on a back seat of the bus. Still hoping that the police would soon release me because of my being an observer, I asked them about their surnames in half-whisper for several timesE Through the window we saw how some policemen were carrying the beaten Valiery Shchukin. On the front seats of the bus were a dozen of policemen in ordinary blue uniform. Near me, on the corner seat, there was a girl sobbing, pressing her hands to the stomach. The policemen ordered us to tell them their surnames, age and slightly searched us. The girl didnTt answer anything to their questions — she suffered much after a kick in the stomach. In some minutes she said that she was pregnant and asked the police to call for an ambulance. At first they didn't believe her and she had to show her stomach. Then they answered: «There's no need for the pregnant to hang around demonstrations!» We also started to ask them to call an ambulance. The answers contained four-letter words onlyE It's not a surprise. In Belarus foul language is one of the basic tokens of a policeman. He silently, like a slave, bears curses of his brass and unburdens himself on the detainees. He rarely commits something without an order. Even if somebody is dying, he will first phone to his chief and only then «take» a decision. It happened so this time as well.

At last the bus started. Soon it stopped near the central office of the Belarusian People's Front. The policemen killed time chatting about Tatars, Moskals and Khokhols (insulting words used instead of «Russians», «Ukrainians»). We started to ask them to release the pregnant, telling them that if something happens we will witness their guilt. Eventually the policemen «surrendered» and phoned to their brass, that ordered...

(continues on page 6)

Witness of an action participant, Aliena Rashetnikava:

«On April 19, 2002 I took part in the action «You Can't Live Like This!». I was in Iakub Kolas Square together with my brother Siarhiei Rabkievich. We saw how the police began to beat an old man. My brother came up to a policeman and told him to stop it. They seized my brother and forced him onto a bus. I ran after them asking: «Why do you detain him? What should I do? Where can I phone?» Instead of answering, they took me onto the bus as well and took to Savietski BBIAE In spite of the fact that I left a small child at home, they detained me for 5 hours. Then they released me, having given me a call-up to court for April 23, 2002.»

LAST WORD OF MIKHAIL KUKABAKA

(Continuation. Begins in the previous number)

The court gives the last word to Mikhail Kukabaka:

Kukabaka: The last word? It seems to me I have already told everythingE Alright.

The witnesses to my «crimes» have testified. My opinion is: however hard the KGB tried to intimidate people, it wasn't enough. I will tell you about one case. Once, at my work a man who was a communist came to me and asked to give him «Archipelago GULag». I gave it to him. When he took the book, he asked me whether I wasn't afraid that he could take the book to the secret services. I answered noE When I looked through the list of the witnesses in my case, I noticed with great pleasure that he wasn't there and came to the thought that the decency of people doesn't depend on their political views. I want to thank all those people who could have testified at this trial, but didn't do it, because they preserved their human dignity.

The propagandists assert that the October revolution was the opening of a new era. I think that the October coup (it really was a coup) put the country many years back. (...) People couldnTt retire from their jobs (the youth don't remember), for being late to work they were imprisoned, one couldn't leave collective farm. People were also imprisoned for the wish to leave the USSR and the refusal to vote. The State watches its citizens according to its wishes, censorship rules the country. Passport — the document that caused so much indignation for Vladimir Ulyanov, was reintroduced in 1932 and turned into a means of State control. It's true to say that the Soviet passport is a prisoner's sign.

The Soviet socialism is a large concentration camp, guarded by many special military forces. Abroad there are also frontier guards, but they fight against smuggling and drug trafficking, in our country such guards hound people.

This regime is worse then feudalism. One could pay a certain sum of money to a feudal lord and become free. The Soviet propaganda states that there are no social classes, they have been eliminated. To my mind, the social division in the USSR hasn't changed much. Before the revolution in Russia there was patrimonial mo-narchy, now there appeared a «new class» — Soviet party bureaucracy, which turned into a specific caste. The money no longer remains a form for conveying of the unofficial privileges of this class. Secretaries of executive committees and prosecutors no longer stand in queues for worthless food-stuffs. I have no doubt that the lining of a prosecutor's fridge differs from that of the fridge the present Liubou Kisiel has.

The judge snaps him up: I will deprive you of the last word! These are personal insults!

Kukabaka: Personal? Why? I speak about a class. KGB workers, for instance, also form a separate caste, being the guarding dogs of the regime, which...

The judge: I warn you! Don't tell insults!

Kukabaka: Have I said something wrong? Have I used foul language?

The judge: Mind your expressions! What does it mean: «KGB is the regime's dog!»?

Kukabaka: It is really so. It is the sheep-dog of the regime.

The judge: I prohibit! I stop you!

Kukabaka: Alright, I will stop it. From the very childhood we are told that the State demands from everyone according to his abilities and gives him according to his work. It is false! It is easier to find out what is the wage of an American senator than a Soviet party boss. This State is called «people's», so everyone should know who is who.

These bosses use the duty cars for their personal needs, have a lot of privileges. Not far from Babruisk there's a military town Kisialievichy — you can compare the living standards there. What social equality and justice can we talk about?

We are told that there's no unemployment in the country. Hitler also eliminated unemployment in Germany. Before his coming to power there were 6 million unemployed, in three years he provided people with work, accom-modation and profit. In USSR the unemployment was

The first of the duties of the person to him or herself is to defend his or her views. I don't take offence at the witnesses. I consider them victims of the Soviet system.

At the trial over Kukabaka: testimony of A. Barysau, who was working as heaver at «Vtorsyryo» together with the defendant:

The witness begins with confidence:

Barysau: He was bringing the book, excerpts from it.

The judge: What book?

— By Solzhenitsyn

— «Archipelago GULag», this book. What did he say?

— He shouted at the Soviet government.

— What bad things did he tell about it?

— The heavers said to him: «In the canteen you sit together with a communist...»

— Did the workers rebut him?

— Yes, they did.

— There were some youngsters who even gave him their flat for headquarters! Provided him with a tape recorder for recording slander. And it is prohibited. One can listen to the radio, but not record!..

— KGB listens as well.

— Well, it does.

— They also make records.

— May be they also record something to save the information.

— They record even with better quality.

— Did you record something with Kukabaka? Did you listen to this record, to his article?

— I listened to it, but there's nothing wrong there.

— And what about language?

— Oh, yes the judge! I have forgotten!

— And how to get rid of all Jews?

Kukabaka, snaps up: What for do you say such things? I am a democrat, it's communists who deprive Germans or Tatars of their native lands, and we, democrats...

Prosecutor asks a question to Barysau: What records were they? How do you evaluate his article?

— You know it yourself.

The judge: We didn't listen to it.

— To be sincere, there's nothing wrong in it, it can be broadcast.

— And the second one?

— It's incomprehensible. KGB knows it.

— But it was you who recorded?

— I didn't record. At that time I... (makes a gesture that denotes drinking alcohol).

— What article did Kukabaka propose you should write?

— He said: if you could write about our drawbacks, we would broadcast it on the radio.

— What did you say?

— I said: Then I will be imprisoned.

— Where did you record the article, in whose house?

— The local police inspector told me the number of the house. I didn't know its number... (laughter in the hall).

— In whose house did he ask you to write an article?

— It is where we bought beer. (laughter again).

— What relation does then the police inspector have to it?

— No, I have forgotten, it was KGB who told me the number of the house. It is such black...

liquidated in 1933. How did Hitler manage it? Using the same methods as the USSR: he introduced control of the working movement, prohibited demonstrations and strikes. It is worth to say that he copied the Soviet system in many respects. It wasn't us who copied him, he copied us. For instance, national-socialist courts were also called «people's». There's one more thorny subject. As it was found, during the Second world war in Europe in Hitler's army there were half a million people (Russians — *ed.*) How could it happen? No country ever experienced such populous treachery. What is this «heaven», if half a million people flee from it? It wasn't real betrayal. Betrayal is a violation of the voluntary under-takings, and here was liberation from the enforced commitments.

I am afraid of prisons and mental asylums. I am not young, 43 years old, and not as healthy as may seem. Sometimes I have heart ache and pains in the liver... I am afraid of returning to prison, but I am afraid of villainy, deception and my participation in them more than of any prison. I am not ashamed of being a prisoner, but I feel bitterness that I was born in this country.

I am not ashamed of more than 30 years of my being an ordinary, obedient part of the system, but my convictions changed long time ago. I came up to the full break out of the system. Yes, I want to leave the USSR and I'd like to be given such opportunity. I want to live according to my views, to read and watch what I want and you censure me for this wish!.. They said here: Kukabaka has almost started fighting once. I have never offended anybody for the whole life! Yes, I had to scuffle when...

The verdict includes all the charges by the prosecution, even those not proved at the trial. Mikhail Kukabaka is sentenced to three years of imprisonment in the penal institution of the common regime.

Having announced the end of the court sitting, the judge leaves the hall. Kukabak asks him to let his friend V. Niakipielau take the conclusive ruling of the court. The judge only waves his hand and flees, murmuring: «I have nothing to do with this any more!».

The convoy takes Kukabaka out. Then V. Niakipielau applies to the judge, asking for the legally allowed meeting with Kukabaka. The judge, whose face is now distorted with malice, shouts: «Now I won't allow you the meeting! You are not the prisoner's relative!»

He doesn't satisfy V. Niakipielau's request in spite of the fact, that the previous day, on June 20, he had promised it to Kukabaka's friend.

The material was taken from the Epocha magazine of February-March 2002. The original version of the material is preserved (translation into English).



Tatsiana REVIAKA, Palina STSIEPANIENKA and Alies BIALIATSKI at the presentation.

«REVIEW-CHRONICLE...» IN WARSAW



Jauhien WAPA speaking.

On April 16 in Warsaw, Conrad Adenauer Foundation hosted the presentation of the polish issue of «Chronicle-Review of human rights violations in Belarus in 2001», prepared by PA HRC Viasna and Center of Civic Education Poland-Belarus (Bialystok, Poland).

The interest in the human rights situation in Belarus was evident, at the presentation there were representatives of the foreign embassies and numerous media, both Polish and Belarusian ones, Polish human rights activists and representatives of the organizations interested in the general situation in the neighboring country. Head of Conrad Adenauer Foundation emphasized this interest in his opening speech.

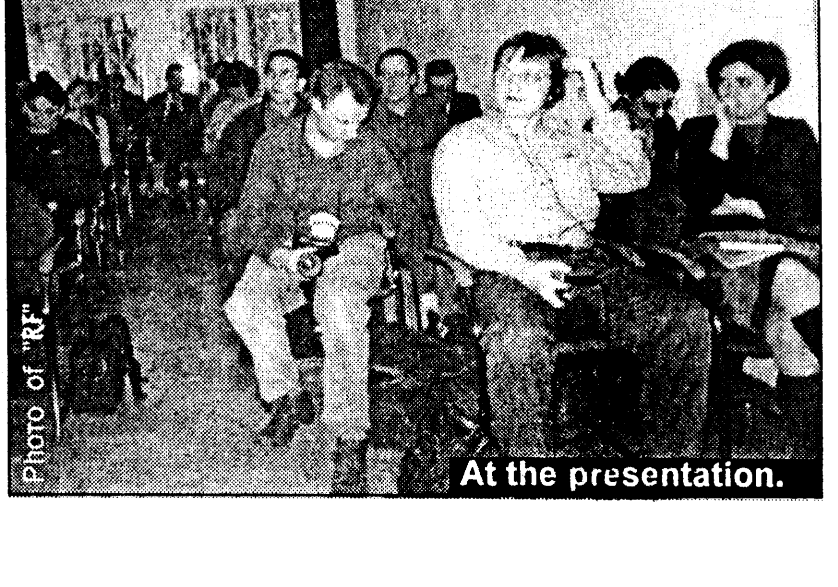
Chairman of the Center of Civic Education Poland-Belarus Marcin Rembach pointed out that the Polish attentively watched the events in Belarus, that was why the edition of the Polish version of the book about human rights violations in Belarus would help people in understanding the situation of the Eastern neighbor.

Workers of the information department of PA HRC Viasna Tatsiana Reviaka and Palina Stsiepanienka appeared with the report «The topic issue of human rights violations in Belarus». Viasna Chairman Alies Bialiatski spoke on «Belarus between the European Community and CIS countries».

The presentation discussed many questions concerning the public and political situation in the country, some concrete cases, mentioned by the Polish press, for instance, the criminal persecution of the editor-in-chief and a journalist of the independent Horadnia newspaper Pahonia.

People were also interested to know about the main tendencies of human rights violations in Belarus, the foreign policy, political, economical and other contacts. Representatives of Viasna expressed their points of view on these and other issues.

It's worth mentioning that starting from 1998 PA HRC Viasna has maintained monitoring of human rights violations in Belarus, issued Chronicle-reviews devoted to this topic. That's why Viasna appreciates the initiative of our Polish colleagues on informing the Polish public about the real situation in Belarus very much.



At the presentation.

Four Days In Detention Center

(continued from page 3)

Impunity is the base for the impudence and groundless violence of the police. During the detention the policemen donTt identify themselves — they seize you and force onto a bus, beating in case of resistance. It is done on the order of their authorities, who are interested in smooth execution of all their orders...

The detainees didn't waste their time. They collected the information and passed it outwards, using the mobile phones. The police chose some of the people and searched them. They took away three stripes — two white and one red, bound together, from a detainee's bag — without composing any acts of confiscation or even oral explanations. It is trifles for our police to violate the law, the authorities will always protect and save them. The «protectors of the public order» also mocked at people, not allowing them to go to WC.

Having made photos and written down surnames of all detainees (more than 100 people) the policemen led us into the hall to join the others. In some time, escorted by the police, a man with camera came in. The people made fun of him. Only then, after four days in the detention center, I found out that it was a cameraman of the Belarusian TV, who was preparing a videotape for the evening newsE The policemen looked sleepy, some of them left the hall, new ones came there instead.

Among the detainees was Aliena Rashetnikava, who had left a small child at home. When three hours (the legal term of administrative detention without filing any accusations) passed, the people started to express their indignation that the policemen would not release her and started to chant: «Tri chasa!» («Three hours!», Russian). The low, monotonous sound was grating on the policemen's nerves and eventually they released her. Then the detainees came up to the entrance of the hall and started to demand to lead them to the lavatory, as the police didn't react to the ordinary requests. At that time the under aged were taken into a bus outside the BBIA, and fewer people stayed behind.

As for me, the police overdid their work and composed two reports of detention instead of one. That's why they lead me in and out of the hall for several times, trying to find out what was wrong. I wrote down my explanations, specified the time of the report composition (it was 11 p.m. already) and demanded they attach the observer's direction to the case materials...

They took people out of the hall in small groups. At first they led us upstairs to a room, where some police official in plain clothes was checking whether the composed reports and other documents were in the right order, then — downstairs, to a duty department. The duty policemen searched us, took away our purses, shoe-laces, keys, gave us copies of the personal search and closed in the temporary detention cells. In an hour they were taking the people out of the cells, loading them into the bus and taking to the detention center in Akrestsin Street. I was in the last group. The policemen had lost the passport of one of the detainees, Raman Kazakievich and put him back into a cell. The rest, nineteen people were loaded into the bus.

We arrived at the detention center approximately at 2.30 on April 20. At first we were taken to cell No.4, then eight of us — to cell No. 22. One could hardly fall asleep there — the wooden plank-beds were absolutely smooth and the body always slipped into an uncomfortable position. On the first day we were adapting ourselves to the new conditions. Approximately at 9 in the morning the guards brought us mush. I ate it with the brown bread, immediately felt burning in my stomach and understood, that if they feed people twice a day, I will have great trouble with it. Four of us went on hunger-strike. We also demanded the guards give us a pen and paper in order to write a complaint to the prosecutor concerning the illegal imprisonment. I received a parcel, but didn't stop the hunger-strike and passed the food to those who ate. In the evening we wrote applications to the head of the detention center concerning the hunger-strike.

On the second day people started to walk on the plank-bed, as there wasn't any other place for it. The previous habitants of the cell had scratched there many boards for chess, draughts, etc. Somebody made draughts of bread, as we had much of it. In the evening we started to dispute on different topics.

On Monday morning the guards took us to the court. in the special car, called «autazak». They put about ten people in the largest cage, four — into two others, which were smaller, and a girl, Marharyta, into the cell with iron door. On our way to the court we were taken to the BBIA for taking back our belongings. It was tight and stuffy in the cell. I spent six hours in the car before the trial. The guards prohibited my mother to pass me mineral water. At the trial I explained my duties of observer, solicited for an advocate. The advocate advised me to agree for the case consideration without summoning the police witnesses to save time, hoping that I will receive three days...

When we were taken back to the detention center, we passed out belongings to the local duty policemen. Vasil Zhakau and I were taken to the empty cell No. 8. A bit later the guards took there Iarek from Salihorsk. The bed there was rugged and it was quite comfortable to lie there. Besides, there was some room for walking. However, it was hard for me to fall asleep (it is more difficult to get warm on hunger-strike). In the morning Vasil and I were loaded in the same car together with two other people. On the way to the court the car stopped in a yard, the police lead us into a basement of a house and locked us in a small cell. Two other prisoners were taken to the Savietski borough court. In half an hour a smaller car, «varanok», took us to Tsentralny borough court.

Vasil was tried first. I could watch my guards through the holes in the door of the cell. They slept, lying in the car. In two hours they took me out for the continuation of the trial. I wore blue shirt, the black coat, which I had on during the detention, was in the bag I had with me.

At the trial the policemen from the special forces Kouzik and Ilimovich gave standard testimonies: «Was in the center of the road, in front of the column, shouted «Long Live Belarus!», «Shame on you!», etc. They often hid their eyes. It was interesting for me to look at them. The trial reminded of a bad comedy. Neither of the «witnesses» could tell exactly what I was wearing during the detention, though I asked them about it. The advocate presented to the court the paper telling that I had a chronic stomach disease and asked the judge to take into consideration the fact that the regime of feeding in the detention center didn't meet my needs.

During the break my parents managed to pass me a bottle of mineral water and told the «witnesses» about the future responsibility for their crimes. By the way, «the witnesses» suffered even without it. It was hard for them to sit motionless, so they quickly were going forth and back the corridor, hiding eyes from the present people.

Judge Pauliuchuk found me guilty and sentenced to four days of arrest. It wasn't bad at all, as only few hours were left. The guards took me back to the detention center, to cell No. 19. The other prisoners had longer terms, so they called phones, asked to phone their friends and relatives, tell them somethingE

April 23, 5.50 p.m. I am released. These four days meant a lot for me. I have personally seen the legendary detention center in Akrestsin Street and experience the things the prisoners have to go through. The thing that made the greatest impression on me is that some of the prisoners have already been in prison this year and came to the action, knowing that they could receive up to 15 days of arrest for it.

Alieh ZHLUTKA.



Photo of "RF"

«Chernobyl Way 2002»



On April 26 in Minsk the traditional mourning procession «Chernobyl Way 2002» devoted to the 16th anniversary of the accident at Chernobyl nuclear power station took place.

Participants of the procession gathered at 5.30 p.m. near the Belarusian Academy of Sciences. Before the procession there was a short meeting. The speakers among whom were representatives of oppositional parties, public organizations, the disabled eliminators of the tragedy's consequences said that the authorities were hiding the truth about the real consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Then the column went along Frantsysk Skaryna Avenue, then turned into Surhanau Street. People carried bells and icons in front of the procession as a sign of their mourning.

Near the Riga supermarket the action participants stood silently with candles for 16 minutes to commemorate the victims of the catastrophe...

Tragedy in Kurapaty

At about 3 a.m. on April 3 unknown persons burnt the tent with the defenders of the place of mass burials of victims of Stalin's repression...

Recently many attempts have been made not only to physically pressurize the Kurapaty defenders, but also to discredit their struggle. The self-declared group «Kurapaty Conscience» continues to inform the editorial offices of many Belarusian media about endless boozes of the defenders and God knows what other things. Personally, I didn't see there any drunk people. Instead, I saw the inhabitants of the surrounding buildings who like to make picnics in the Kurapaty wood. By the way, the fact that there's still no fence around the territory which is formally under the State protection, doesn't seem to disturb the responsible officials.



In the numerous publications of the State press the youngsters who guard Kurapaty are accused of hindering the timely completion of the reconstruction and widening of the Minsk ring road in the suburb of Zialiony Luh-7 by April 1. They say that the defenders, athwart the project that was discussed and agreed with the public, don't allow to cover with sand about 30 centimeters near the road. One of the volunteers explained to me that it is too early to talk about some agreement, the debates continue. Besides, he reminded me that even in the places, where the opinions were alike, the builders allowed inadmissible departures from the project.

In one of the commentaries by the official press an unknown author complained that the defenders' tent stood near the road, hindering the builders. I should remind that there are about 100 meters and also mark the strange coincidence — the complaints hit the stand on Friday morning, several hours after the tent is burnt.

That night the tent housed three people: Aliaxandr Poklad, Vasil Parfiankou and Iryna Viatkina. Vasil Parfiankou was the first to smell the smoke. He says the following: «I flung out of the room, took the fire-extinguisher. The top of the tent and its entrance were burning. The extinguisher didn't help much, the liquid soon came to the end. The tent was burning quite intensively. So, I returned to the tent, woke Iryna and we came out. The third of us is in hospital, in the intensive care department. He was fast asleep and didn't manage to follow us at once. When everything started to fall down, he started to shout, we took him out through the window, called for the police and for an ambulance. Aliaxandr Poklad was taken to hospital...»

One more influential newspaper seemed to prepare the public opinion on the eve of the burning, telling about the same mythological agreement of the sides. So, there appears a natural question: who benefits from it? I will also advise it to all the critics to come and spend a night on duty with the defenders. To be sincere, I couldn't make it myself. In the evening of April 19 drunk neo-Nazis came, but seeing the exceeding number of the defenders, decided to retreat, but promised to return. I decided not to wait for them, knowing about the earlier assaults on the camp. Many different people were coming there: the police, skinheads, mindless drunkards and bullwhackers. The youngsters are still there... The most absurd accusation, to my mind, is that that the defenders violate the law about protection of monuments. It means that not the people who make the road through the graves to save the money, but those who defend the place where victims of Stalin's repression, spending there all the time, violate the law! The State media say that the defenders «fenced the wood with crosses, spoiling the outlook». It is nonsen-se! The two and half meters high crosses, made of the polished balks, almost one meter in the earth, look very natural, creating a «way to Golgotha».

This sight, as well as constant presence of the young people, interested in their history unnerves some. Being annoyed by the topic of Kurapaty, they want to put an end to it all, but the youth stands in the way.

Vadzim DOUNAR.

WITCH-HUNT

LUKASHENKA HAS STARTED A NEW CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE BELARUSIAN CULTURE, LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE...

In mid-April the secondary schools of Belarus received the circular letter, singed by the minister of education P. Bryhadzin. According to this document the Belarusian literature is excluded from the list of the obligatory exams a pupil has to pass at the final exams. So, the last stimulus for learning and speaking the Belarusian language is not there any longer. Before this, the pupils had to prepare themselves to the exam, to read and retell the works of literature, learn verses by heart. Now they don't need to do this. This is the Belarusian way of democratization. In the countries with the normal language situation such a step could really look democratic. In our country it is another attempt on the prestige of the mother tongue of the Russified nation. During KhrushchevTs ruling there was something of the kind in Belarus: pupils could refuse from learning the Belarusian language. The explanation was rather simple: soon, when Communism has been built, all languages of the Soviet Union will naturally merge into one, the Russian language, that's why there's no need to waste time learning Belarusian. So, they did away with it. If it was allowed, they would also annul studying physics or mathematics. Something like this is takeing place at present, in the national State. Is there any other country, whose habitants decide whether to be owners of their land, respect their own culture (first of all language and literature), whether to remain conscious. There's no such country, except, may be, Belarus...

Even the worst pupils perceive that it's not necessary to spend much effort studying the Belarusian literature, reading books of Bahdanovich, Haretski, learn by heart the poems by Hilievich and Baradulin? That's why, judging by the pre-examination opinion polls, the prestige of Belarusian is very low. Only a few pupils are going to take an exam in it...

Let's return to the letter. What is it: the self-will of P. Bryhadzin caused by failure to perceive the need for the development of Belarusian culture? No, quite on the contrary. It is a reflection of the present State policy, which not only abstains from everything Belarusian, but also purposefully destroys it. Naturally, behind is the will of the Belarusian president, without his order even cows in the worst collective farms won't come in.

Having made short work of the language, the authorities proceeded to the literature, using the same Jesuitical methods in order to make people «independently» refuse from everything national, so that it doesn't seem that the authorities defy the Belarusian books, but ordinary people.

What can we do if the first Belarusian president has such life principles. The thing is that the Soviet rule and the communist party who don't pay much attention to such trifles as honesty and humanism dealt with his upbringing more than his parents. That's why Lukashenka can and ventures to do everything. He successfully changed the Belarusian politics, adopting Hitler's techniques of government. He soon improved the national economy (raised its level above the knee), asserting that the lucky Belarusians would live poorly, but not long. That's why the offence to the literature and writers is quite logical. Here was one of the last centers of the national spirit. Why has Lukashenka decided to get to the literary workers? How many of them support his anti-Belarusian policy? Only several people without great literary skills.

The majority of the Belarusian writers don't support Lukashenka's politics. That's why it's high time to calm them down, categorically, without any sentiments and humanism. This looks quite natural for the president who drives people to the «lucky future» with the permanent slogan: «Who is not with me, is against me!». The process of the shameless hounding accelerates its pace with every coming day. This witch-hunt is aimed at the defamation and liquidation of everything Belarusian. The chief editors of the magazines Polymia, Maladosts, Krynitsa, Nioman have been fired. All these magazines that used to be independent ones, now have become parts of one «collective farm» — an establishment, headed by the deputy of the Chamber of Representatives Siarhiei Kastsian, wideknown for his Slavophilic and communistic views. It was the minister of information, who appointed him on this position on Lukashenka's proposal, cynically violating the law «On Press», statutes of the editions, the rights of their foundersE The «comrades» who demonstrate loyalty to the regime, have replaced the liberal editors. It is easy to understand: now the main tasks of the magazines will be to glamorize the presidential success in the economy and agriculture in the «prominent» literary works with the simultaneous elimination of the Belarusian culture. The ordinary members of the editorial staff also face the danger of being fired because of their wish to write what they think and the ability to think about the future of their country.

The most important thing Lukashenka demands from his vassals is to lie smoothly and shamelessly. His personal abilities Lukashenka showed at the recent appearance on the Russian TV, in an NTV broadcast: he insistently tried to convince the present people that going to school he read Vasil Bykau's poems (the world-known Belarusian writer neither wrote nor published any poems and there couldn't be any in the school curriculum...). The people praised Lukashenka for the ostensible support to the Union of the Belarusian Writers, though its members haven't received their wages for almost a year, for the fatherly care about the Belarusian periodicals — again lies, the workers of the editorial staffs haven't received wages and money for the issue of their editions for a year, either. Did they praise him because they didn't know what is going on in Belarus, or, maybe, because they didn't want to know?

Lies rule Belarus nowadays. All key positions are occupied by Lukashenka's faithful servants, professional liars, «brought up on Bykau's poems». I won't be surprised if Lukashenka declares this spring to be a bad winter for his personal interests. Isn't it possible in the country full of fall guys?

Alies HARKUN.

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